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Negotiating Humanity: A Posthumanist Reading of Ago-ma-ago among Minangkabau Women

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Abstract

This paper examines the cultural and sociological significance of the Minangkabau women's bargaining behavior known as ago-ma-ago, which transcends transactional economics and serves as a socially embedded practice of negotiation and identity. By employing a qualitative descriptive approach based on in-depth interviews and direct observation in traditional markets in West Sumatra, Indonesia, the study identifies ago-ma-ago not only as a means to obtain better prices but as a dynamic expression of community wisdom, relational identity, and cultural resilience. It reflects emotional intelligence, resistance to capitalist fixed-price norms, and posthumanist values in human interactions. Findings suggest that ago-ma-ago plays a role in maintaining social bonds and informal economic fairness while reaffirming traditional gender roles and cultural knowledge transmission. The paper contributes to broader debates on localized socio-economic agency in the face of modernization and offers a theoretical positioning of ago-ma-ago as an act of cultural preservation and relational negotiation within posthumanist discourses.

Keywords: Ago-ma-ago, Posthumanism, Minangkabau, Bargaining, Cultural Identity.

Introduction

In the era of digital commerce and fixed-price transactions, the persistence of traditional bargaining practices reflects not only economic negotiation but also deep-rooted cultural logic and social structure (Hamhij, 2023). Among these practices, the *ago-ma-ago* tradition of Minangkabau women in West Sumatra, Indonesia, is particularly notable. More than a market behavior, *ago-ma-ago* functions as a medium for social exchange, cultural affirmation, and emotional expression (Salem et al., 2019). This study situates *ago-ma-ago* within posthumanist thought, viewing it as cultural agency responding to economic rationalization and market homogenization.

Bargaining, a process of mutually beneficial exchange (Evans & Beltramini, 1987; Lee, 2000), plays a crucial role in buying and selling interactions (Lee, 2000; Neslin & Greenhalgh, 1983). It emerges when buyer and seller have not reached a satisfactory price, prompting further negotiation.

In Minangkabau, this act is called “*ago-ma-ago*,” derived from the lexeme “ago,” meaning “bargain.” Consumers inclined to bargain are described as “*pa-ago*” (Ott, 2016; Rusmali et al.,

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1985; Syamsarul, 2012). This practice is especially prevalent among Minangkabau women, both in their homeland and in migration. Reasons for bargaining include savings, price satisfaction, uncertainty of product quality, price variation among sellers, and past purchasing experiences (Kassaye, 1990; Sharma & Krishnan, 2001). Although the retail landscape evolves, traditional practices persist. In Turkey, for instance, the number of traditional markets increased despite modern retail growth (Ozcan, 2000). Modern retail tends to attract the upper middle class, while lower-income groups still favor traditional markets (Amine & Lazzaoui, 2011; Boulaksil et al., 2019). In West Sumatra, *ago-ma-ago* remains a cultural norm.

Bargaining has received limited attention in marketing literature. Two approaches dominate: the first focuses on individual characteristics and interpersonal dynamics (Campbell et al., 1988; Graham, 1989), while the second emphasizes information processing, such as how buyers assess trust and reliability (Brucks & Schurr, 1990; Schurr & Ozanne, 1985). Few studies address bargaining attitudes or the diversity of bargaining styles. As global commerce expands, understanding cultural variations in bargaining becomes essential.

This study addresses the gap by examining the bargaining attitudes and styles of Minangkabau women. While prior studies often highlight American or Chinese bargaining behaviors (Graham, 1989; Shenkar & Ronen, 1987; Swierczek, 1990), the underlying drivers remain underexplored. Using a descriptive qualitative approach through surveys and interviews, this research explores attitudes, intentions, and styles in the buying process. It aims to (1) trace the cultural origins of *ago-ma-ago* in Minangkabau society and (2) distinguish between general bargaining and *ago-ma-ago* as a culturally embedded practice.

Literature Review

Haggling is a negotiation between buyer and seller regarding product pricing, whether tangible goods or services (Sahoo et al., 2023). In traditional markets, this is called “haggling” (Ott, 2016), while in corporate or political contexts it is termed “bargaining” or “negotiation” (Fells, 1986; Leider & Lovejoy, 2016).

According to the Minangkabau Dictionary (1993), bargaining involves discussion over purchase terms and is synonymous with chaffering, haggling, or negotiation. Wossen Kassaye, (1990) defines consumer bargaining as complex interactions to reach acceptable prices, involving not just price but also product features, warranties, and service. The term *ago-ma-ago*, native to Minangkabau, reflects the cultural practice of bargaining in West Sumatra (Syamsarul, 2012). It occurs in traditional markets, stalls, and shops without fixed prices, using the local language as the medium (Samosir, 2019). Typically initiated by buyers, it involves rhetorical exchanges to reach a mutual price agreement.

Most Minangkabau people understand and use *ago-ma-ago* when shopping. Its effectiveness depends on one's skill in bargaining, often resulting in prolonged and intense negotiations (Kassaye, 1990; Sharma & Krishnan, 2001). Housewives frequently engage in this practice, though men participate to a lesser extent (Samosir, 2019). Minangkabau culture is closely tied to migration and trading. This includes the enduring use of *ago-ma-ago* by migrants, reinforcing their identity and bargaining expertise (Handayani, 2022).

Posthumanism explores the interconnectedness of individuals, society, and knowledge systems. *Ago-ma-ago* exemplifies posthumanist ideals through its emphasis on emotional communication, cultural identity, and relational exchange over impersonal transactions. Historical accounts affirm the role of women in Southeast Asian trade. Antonio Galvao observed

women as key figures in commerce during the 16th century (Reid, 2014). Known for financial wisdom, women in regions like Maluku, Java, and Sumatra have long engaged in price negotiations. Minangkabau mothers even taught daughters to understand market dynamics (Dobbin, 1974; Reid, 2014).

Padang people are known for comparing prices, qualities, and styles before purchasing, reflecting a deep cultural attachment to *ago-ma-ago* (Aziz, 2022). They bargain not only to save money but to avoid being “*ta kicuah*” (cheated) or “*kanai ota*” (deceived).

Ago-ma-ago also serves as a tool for information gathering. Buyers often pretend to purchase to learn about prices or product specifications. This dual function aligns with research emphasizing bargaining and searching as key marketing elements (Binmore et al., 1989; Brucks & Schurr, 1990; Weg et al., 1996; Zwick & Lee, 1999).

Bargaining is deeply embedded in Minangkabau life. It creates a sense of kinship, where negotiation is not just transactional but a shared social moment. It reflects local wisdom and mutual cultural understanding between buyers and sellers.

Drawing on Haraway (1991) cyborg metaphor, *ago-ma-ago* represents a hybrid form of agency, rooted in embodied knowledge and cultural memory. It resists the standardization of modern commerce by emphasizing affective and ethical interactions (Braidotti, 2013; Hayles, 2000).

Bargaining also nurtures interpersonal virtues. It requires buyers to be informed and patient, while sellers must communicate effectively and price fairly (Rahmawaty, 2023). The process encourages politeness, tolerance, and mutual respect, reinforcing social cohesion. Beyond monetary gain, bargaining is about dialogue, opinion exchange, and cultural continuity (Rahmawaty, 2023). It forms lasting social bonds and enhances the market experience.

Culture, defined as the 'software of the mind,' influences trading behaviors (Attoh & Ajeyomi, 2020; Hofstede et al., 2010). Bargaining styles and market interactions are expressions of collective cultural programming and shared values. Gunia et al. (2011) identify five interlinked variables; culture, trust, strategy, insight, and mutual benefit, underpinning successful bargaining relationships. This model illustrates how cultural grounding shapes transactional outcomes, as shown in Figure 1 below:



Figure 1: The Causal Relationship between Culture, Trust, Bargaining Strategies, Insights and Mutual Benefits

Source: Gunia et al. (2011) processed by the author

The debate among experts and researchers above about the effect of bargaining has formed two camps. The first camp states that bargaining occurs due to a lack of trust between buyers and sellers due to the lack of transparency of the quality of goods on the seller's side. Another expert understanding found that bargaining occurs because of the need for social interaction that forms culture. Indeed, the essence of this debate contains three constructs, namely; price, quality and culture as an inseparable part of bargaining behaviour.

An important aspect of bargaining that occurs in traditional markets in Minangkabau when shopping is being respectful and friendly with the seller. Being friendly can have great benefits in getting a better price. The bargaining that takes place in traditional markets and conventional shops has some uniqueness that is hard to find elsewhere. Bargaining creates an interactive atmosphere that cannot be found in electronic transactions or online purchases. In traditional markets, buyers can see, touch and feel the items they want to buy. Sellers also have the opportunity to communicate directly with potential buyers. This allows for dialogue, exchange of opinions, and more detailed explanations of products, strengthening the social interaction between both parties. A friendly smile is part of the strategy to get the best final price in bargaining (Exchange, 2015). Bargaining is not only encouraged when buying and selling, but is also an important part of Minangkabau customs.

Methodology

Design:

This research adopts a qualitative descriptive approach, combining ethnographic observation with semi-structured interviews. Which is an effort to find and disclose relevant information, contained in a shorter and simpler data presentation, which ultimately leads to the need for explanation and interpretation (Giantari et al., 2018; Simamora, 2004). Two key informants were selected: a Minangkabau housewife with strong market experience and a senior cultural commentator deeply familiar with Minangkabau traditions. The fieldwork was conducted in Pasa Ateh Bukittinggi and Padang, where live observations of shopping interactions and participant reflections were documented.

Population and sample:

This research was conducted at Pasa Ateh Bukittinggi and the object of research was to directly observe the buying and selling process carried out on the purchase of consumer goods as a comparison sample. Then an in-depth interview was conducted with a female resource person who was considered to meet the criteria with the status; housewife, S1 education, profession as a trader and buyer, at least 1-2 times a week shopping in traditional markets or conventional shops. Furthermore, an in-depth interview was conducted with an interviewee who was selected and fulfilled the following criteria; Minangkabau culturalist, writer, experienced at least 20 years in the field.

In-depth Interview with the First Interviewee

To complete the latest information about bargaining culture in Minangkabau, the author conducted a field search through an in-depth interview of bargaining practices with the first informant. The in-depth interview was conducted on 14 October 2023 with a 55 year-old Minangkabau housewife with an undergraduate education who lives in Padang City. From the in-depth interview, preliminary data was collected on the behaviour of Minangkabau mothers in relation to their bargaining practices almost every time they shop at markets or conventional stores.

In fulfilling their daily needs, the informants always shop at traditional markets in order to obtain a cheaper purchase price through the practice of *ago-ma-ago*. When the informant has information about the price of the goods to be purchased and refers to the price of the previous purchase, the informant immediately buys the goods without going through a significant *ago-ma-ago* process. However, when they have to shop at other sellers or shops, they will still carry

out the *ago-ma-ago* process before making a purchase.

When it comes to shopping in modern shopping centres, the informant is not affected by the habit of *ago-ma-ago* practices that he often does when shopping in traditional markets, but when he sees prices that are higher than usual, the informant simply cancels his intention to buy and realises that modern shopping centres do not impose *ago-ma-ago* practices. Finally, the author got preliminary information through the in-depth interview that, *ago-ma-ago* behaviour in individuals with higher educational backgrounds will have lower *ago-ma-ago* behaviour and be more rational in shopping. This means that when consumers have obtained shopping satisfaction based on previous shopping experiences and if moderated by the level of education, it will have a negative effect on *ago-ma-ago* behaviour.

Live Observation of Buying and Selling in Pasa Ateh Bukittinggi

On Tuesday, 28 November 2023, two shopping processes were observed at Pasa Ateh Bukittinggi. Starting with shopping at a Kopiah shop, *ago-ma-ago* process took place between the buyer and the seller of the kopiah who was also a woman. Finally, the transaction took place at a price 10% lower than the first offer. The experience that the author gets and feels as a researcher, that the price offered with the final agreement price can be considered reasonable, even though it has gone through a fairly long *ago-ma-ago* process.

The second observation was made at an apparel shop. In this shop, the buyer's choice fell on a plan to buy children's batik pants that are usually used by kindergarten children to go to the Koran or learn to pray. The respondent began to ask the seller about the price of the trousers. Casually, the seller offered the trousers, which measured no more than 50 cm, at a price of Rp. 90 thousand. The respondent seemed stunned to hear the seller's first offer. With a slightly annoyed tone, the respondent offered a price of Rp. 30 thousand. The battle of *ago-ma-ago* was very tense, which finally reached the stage of telling stories about the origin of their respective villages. The *ago-ma-ago* process was very intimate and more relaxed than before. Finally, a final price of Rp 35,000 was agreed upon, and the transaction took place.

The phenomenon that occurred was that the first buying and selling case took place relatively casually with the *ago-ma-ago* process showing the values of familiarity, friendliness and smiles between sellers and buyers according to the values that should exist in the bargaining process. However, in the second shopping phenomenon, the *ago-ma-ago* process was very tense without any sense of familiarity, although in the end it also became very familiar because it was seasoned by stories of problems in their respective hometowns of fellow Minangkabau tribes. At the beginning of the *ago-ma-ago* process, there was a sense of resentment and compulsion to buy, resentment and regret to enter the apparel shop. The initial offer price and the final price agreement have a very far range and cause shopping discomfort, although in the end the sale and purchase transaction still occurs.

The phenomena and observations that occurred in this shopping case have been related by the author to the print and e-paper media of Harian Singgalang on 1 December 2023 (Aziz, 2023b).

In-depth Interview with the Second Interviewee

The researcher tried to dig deeper into the origin of *ago-ma-ago* culture in an in-depth interview with a Minangkabau culturalist and writer and senior journalist Hasril Chanigo on 16 February 2024.

The author's justification for the bargaining behaviour in Minangkabau known as "ago-ma-ago

behaviour" or in scientific language the author calls it "behavioural *ago-ma-ago*" was carried out through an interview with Mr. H. Hasril Chaniago. He is a culturalist, writer and senior journalist from Minangkabau, who the author considers to fulfil the criteria as a source of information considering the many articles and books he has published. The results of the discussion provide an overview of behavioural *ago-ma-ago* in Minangkabau as follows:

1. *Ago-ma-ago* is a concept in the Minangkabau language that encompasses the activity of bargaining. However, the use of the term "*ago-ma-ago*" in Minangkabau culture is not as literal as the bargaining that is commonly done in buying and selling transactions outside the Minangkabau region. The concept of *ago-ma-ago* contains a broader social dimension, not only limited to commercial transactions, but also acts as a form of intelligent social communication.
2. The characteristics of *ago-ma-ago* that distinguish it from conventional bargaining can be seen in the context of purchasing agricultural or fishery products from farmers and fishermen. In *ago-ma-ago*, the bidding process does not only focus on lowering prices, but also involves adding or subtracting goods. Such an approach is not uncommon in shopping practices in other countries, such as in Australia, and is in line with human instincts that have existed since ancient times. However, in Minangkabau, the practice of *ago-ma-ago* is coloured by distinctive cultural nuances and influenced by social values that serve as a foundation for social interaction.
3. The practice of *ago-ma-ago* in Minangkabau can also be influenced by external factors, such as the proximity between sellers and buyers who come from the same town or the common use of the Minangkabau language, which creates an atmosphere of familiarity known as "*badunsanak*". As a result, *ago-ma-ago* transactions in Minangkabau often take place in a warm and friendly atmosphere.
4. The practice of *ago-ma-ago* in Minangkabau can also be influenced by external factors, such as the proximity between sellers and buyers who come from the same town or the common use of the Minangkabau language, which creates an atmosphere of familiarity known as "*badunsanak*". As a result, *ago-ma-ago* transactions in Minangkabau often take place in a warm and friendly atmosphere.
5. In situations where buyers have a higher social status, interpersonal intelligence in communication, including friendliness, jokes and persuasion towards sellers who are from the same neighbourhood, can result in closeness between the two. Buyers in this case are less likely to actively *ago-ma-ago* and are more willing to purchase the item at the price first offered by the seller.
6. Traditionally, the practice of *ago-ma-ago* in shopping for daily needs tends to be carried out by women, in line with social norms in Minangkabau which stipulate that *ago-ma-ago* is a skill possessed by women and is considered a light work that should not be done by men. This is one of the distinctive features of the *ago-ma-ago* culture in Minangkabau that distinguishes it from bargaining practices in other cultures in Indonesia and in other countries.
7. Expertise in *ago-ma-ago* in Minangkabau comes not only from experience, but also from a long tradition of trading among the local community. Thus, *ago-ma-ago* culture is not just an ordinary form of bargaining, but a distinctive heritage that distinguishes Minangkabau society from other bargaining cultures.

Results of Field Survey

The conclusion of the field survey and in-depth interviews conducted to obtain primary data on

the ago-ma-ago behaviour of Minangkabau women has provided an understanding to the researcher. The understanding of *ago-ma-ago* behaviour can be summarised in three themes as follows:

Theme 1: Ago-ma-ago as Culture in Minangkabau

The results of exploring the relationship between *ago-ma-ago* as a culture in Minangkabau in observing the direct buying and selling process, resulted in the view that the practice of *ago-ma-ago* has indeed become a culture in Minangkabau. It can be seen from the first encounter between the seller and the buyer. The seller provokes the buyer to bargain by showing various items with varying prices, even though at first the buyer is just looking around and is still looking for the item he wants. Instinctively, the seller begins to offer prices of various types of goods to attract the attention of the buyer to stop by and bargain for the merchandise.

Information obtained from Interviewee-1, that in general, when shopping at the market, the majority of buyers practice *ago-ma-ago* when shopping. The informant said that he would still *ago-ma-ago* when he had to shop at the market but the intensity of his *ago-ma-ago* would depend on the reasonableness of the price offered by the seller. Interviewees also said that the *ago-ma-ago* culture will remain and will never disappear because it has become a shopping culture for buyers in Minangkabau.

Interviewee-2 explained that Minangkabau people are information-conscious, so they are very fond of *ago-ma-ago* so as not to be deceived when shopping. Minangkabau people have recognised sales in the form of discounts as in the modern era today, it has been done by Minangkabau people since hundreds of years ago (such as in the sale of vegetables or fish produced by farmers or fishermen). *Ago-ma-ago* in Minangkabau is not just about bargaining during buying and selling but more about social interaction in Minangkabau society. The element of closeness, kinship that exists between sellers and buyers during *ago-ma-ago* will directly lower the bid price to a reasonable limit, so that the *ago-ma-ago* process will occur in a friendly manner.

Theme 2: Quality and Price of Goods as Drivers of Ago-ma-ago Practices

Ago ago-ma-ago that occurs in observations when shopping at Pasa Ateh Bukittinggi arises after buyers see and observe the quality of the goods to be purchased. In the first purchase, the *ago ago-ma-ago* process that occurred did not last long because the price offered by the seller was relatively logically acceptable to the buyer after seeing the quality of the product. In the *ago ago-ma-ago* for the second shopping process, the *ago ago-ma-ago* process lasted quite long and sharp. This happens because the price offered by the seller cannot be accepted logically by the buyer. Buyers feel the unreasonableness of the price offered based on previous shopping experience for the same type of product or the price of adult clothing as a comparison.

The second case of the shopping process in Interviewee-1 has clearly shown that product type and quality positively and significantly affect price. In addition, price unreasonableness has triggered consumers' intention to behave *ago-ma-ago*. This condition is consistent with and supported by the findings of Gassler et al. (2019); Hidalgo-Baz et al. (2017); Loebnitz and Aschemann-Witzel, (2016) and Prentice et al. (2019) and research conducted by (Maynard & Maynard, 1984; Nasar et al., 2016; Pen, 1952; Sahoo et al., 2023). *Ago-ma-ago's* behaviour will turn into action due to the urge to want to make product purchases of products. This condition is also in accordance with and supported by the theory of Perugini and Bagozzi (2001) and research conducted by Concari et al. (2023) and Parkinson et al. (2018).

Interview with Interviewee-1 has also illustrated that the interviewee will do *ago-ago* when shopping with other sellers for the same product. *Ago-ma-ago* is done to get a low price for the product to be purchased. With the understanding that the *ago-ma-ago* behaviour that has become a culture will appear triggered by the uncertainty of product quality when shopping at other sellers, because there is no previous shopping experience at that seller.

From the interview with Interviewee-2, it was explained that the *ago-ma-ago* process does not only focus on price reduction, but also involves the addition or subtraction of goods. Interviewee-2 did not link the quality of the product to the price because the *ago-ma-ago* practice is influenced by external factors, such as the proximity of the seller and buyer who come from the same city or the common use of Minangkabau language, which creates an atmosphere of familiarity known as "*badunsanak*". As a result, *ago-ma-ago* transactions in Minangkabau often take place in a warm and friendly atmosphere.

Theme 3: The Difference between Bargaining and Ago-ma-ago in Minangkabau

From direct observations of the buying and selling process and the explanations of the informants, the researcher concluded that there is a clear difference between general bargaining and *ago-ma-ago* in Minangkabau as shown in table 1.

Bargaining	Ago-ma-ago in Minangkabau
Focus on the goal of getting a price reduction or discount	Besides the main purpose of getting a price reduction, there are social interactions that establish closeness between sellers and buyers.
Formation of distance between sellers and buyers	The approach taken by the seller is necessary to attract the buyer's attention and the approach taken by the buyer is used to maximise the price reduction.
Purchase intension is formed only from consumer satisfaction created by the balance of price and perceived quality.	Purchase intension is formed from kinship ties that occur due to social interactions during <i>ago-ma-ago</i> practices. Sometimes, customers do not hesitate to mention the low quality of past purchases but still make purchases at the same place. Even a slightly expensive price is no longer a problem because customer satisfaction is formed from emotional closeness.
Salesperson hospitality is shaped by formal training to attract customers to sell at a higher value.	The seller's hospitality is formed from customs and culture, customer satisfaction and customer purchase intention will encourage the seller to reduce the price from the previous price.
The proximity between seller and buyer has little effect on the selling price.	The closeness, kinship and hospitality created during the <i>ago-ma-ago</i> process are not only aimed at getting the lowest price. In fact, <i>ago-ma-ago</i> intentions will decrease and buyers are willing to buy at a higher price

Bargaining	<i>Ago-ma-ago</i> in Minangkabau
	than the previous purchase price.
The concept of kinship should not be conflated with the notion of bargaining power.	Kinship, familiarity and hospitality become bargaining power in <i>ago-ma-ago</i> practices.
Bargaining practices only happen for a short period of time and only focus on the purchase.	The <i>ago-ma-ago</i> practice can last longer because it is peppered with other conversations that are not related to the purpose of shopping
The practice of bargaining is a shopping tradition	The practice of <i>ago-ma-ago</i> is an indigenous Minangkabau culture that has been practised for hundreds of years. The practice of <i>ago-ma-ago</i> is formed from the migrating culture of young Minangkabau men and the habit of <i>ago-ma-ago</i> taught by every parent to their daughters from an early age.
Bargaining is only allowed at certain shopping locations.	<i>Ago-ma-ago</i> practices can occur anywhere outside of buying and selling.

Table 1: Differences between Bargaining and *Ago-ma-ago* Culture

Source: Authors' Own Work

Result

1. *Ago-ma-ago* as Cultural Intimacy and Social Intelligence: *Ago-ma-ago* reveals layers of communicative acts beyond price negotiation. It includes storytelling, emotional signaling, and social rituals that foster a sense of "*badunsanak*" (kinship). These practices enable Minangkabau women to navigate market uncertainty with confidence, empathy, and social tact.
2. Resistance to Market Rationalization: The preference for *ago-ma-ago* demonstrates a cultural resistance to the impersonal nature of modern retail. Unlike fixed-price models, *ago-ma-ago* reasserts human agency and relational value. It creates a space where prices are not only about economic value but negotiated meaning.
3. Gendered Knowledge Transmission: The practice is largely sustained by women, passed down from mothers to daughters as part of daily life and cultural upbringing. This gendered transmission of knowledge affirms women not just as consumers but as cultural bearers and community negotiators.
4. Emotional Logic and Fairness: While *ago-ma-ago* is ostensibly about lowering prices, it is also about fairness, recognition, and mutual satisfaction. Sellers are expected to respond with hospitality and flexibility, guided not by algorithms or corporate rules but by social expectations and relational ethics.

Discussion

In the researcher's exploration of *ago-ma-ago* behaviour used by Minangkabau women when shopping, the researcher identified three main themes, namely; *Ago-ma-ago* as a culture in Minangkabau, the quality and price of goods as a trigger for *ago-ma-ago* practice and the difference in bargaining with *ago-ma-ago* in Minangkabau. These themes and sub-themes were

derived from the descriptive approach taken by the researcher through direct observation of the buying and selling process which was confirmed through in-depth interviews from two selected resource persons. The inductive approach was deliberately used to guide the analysis so that the researcher can develop imagination and build narratives according to the results of in-depth interviews with the interviewees. The main informants in this research have expertise in Minangkabau culture and have a deep understanding of the development of Minangkabau culture, which has produced many great works in the form of books and biographies (Wikipedia, 2021).

Bargaining behaviour or better known among the Minangkabau people as *ago-ma-ago* culture, still continues to survive in the modern retail era. In fact, researchers dare to reveal that *ago-ma-ago* behaviour theory has been used as a strategy in modern retail live shopping as a solution to the uncertainty of online shopping. However, this opinion needs further research for its validity. Bargaining is a widespread pricing practice, but the literature is limited (Zhang & Jiang, 2014). Research conducted by (Zeng et al., 2016) on the implementation of a switch programme from haggling to fixed prices on used car sales by Toyota dealers in the Canadian Market, found that the policy has resulted in the loss of some consumers who continue to prefer haggling patterns. However, (Zeng et al., 2016) did not examine the real reasons why consumers continue to choose bargaining practices in the used car buying process.

As part of the demographics collected, the interviewees have shared their experiences and successes in *ago-ma-ago* practices in particular and life in Minangkabau culture in general. Although the interviews focused more on *ago-ma-ago* practices and culture, other discussions related to behaviour and customs in Minangkabau related to the business habits of Minangkabau people deserve attention from future researchers.

In reframing *ago-ma-ago* through a posthumanist lens, we identify it as a practice that privileges affective labor, interdependence, and embodied knowledge. It resists market abstraction and rehumanizes commerce through contextual, situated exchanges. Furthermore, it challenges dominant economic narratives by emphasizing negotiation as a social practice rather than economic efficiency.

Research Limitation and Implication

The limitations of the study lie in the limited number of observations of *ago-ma-ago* practices and interviewees used to confirm the veracity of the findings. Therefore, although the researcher presents these findings as potential strategies to support future sales strategies, these findings must be understood in the perspective of the theoretical studies that are being studied and built by the researcher.

Furthermore, although this research was conducted only in Padang City and Bukittingi City as the centre of Minangkabau culture, of course the cultural influence is stronger than if this research was conducted on Minangkabau women who are in other areas or have migrated. This condition will be an opportunity for future research on relevant topics. Thus, future research may include the influence of population location, age which will influence the level of emotion that will give different results on behavioural *ago-ma-ago* or behavioural *ago-ma-ago*.

The implications of this research will add reference and knowledge in the field of marketing strategy development. Behavioural *ago-ma-ago* can be a deeper study considering that bargaining practices are unique behaviours that have implications for increasing sales as has been proven by live shopping (Hu & Chaudhry, 2020; Ma, 2021; Wang et al., 2022; Zhang &

Tang, 2023).

Conclusion

The empirical findings of this study suggest that *ago-ma-ago* is not merely a bargaining technique but a situated cultural technology that mediates trust, identity, and collective memory among Minangkabau women. In resisting fixed-price mechanisms and the depersonalization embedded in digital commerce, *ago-ma-ago* enacts a form of posthuman agency, deeply embodied, affective, and relational in nature. As global markets increasingly adopt algorithmic pricing and AI-mediated transactions, the persistence of this tradition underscores the irreplaceable value of embodied negotiation, emotional tact, and cultural intimacy. Rather than being rendered obsolete by modernization, *ago-ma-ago* may transform into hybrid practices that coexist with digital systems while preserving their ethical and relational core. In this way, *ago-ma-ago* exemplifies how local cultural practices can reassert agency in the face of techno-capitalist standardization, aligning with posthumanist visions of situated subjectivity and affective economies.

From a marketing perspective, the enduring practice of *ago-ma-ago* offers fertile ground for the development of alternative strategies, particularly in the increasingly competitive and culturally saturated landscape of retail. While modern retail continues to evolve toward convenience and speed, *ago-ma-ago* behavior, imbued with values of familiarity, kinship, hospitality, and authenticity, has long functioned as a relational marketing strategy grounded in Minangkabau cultural norms. These embedded cultural values not only support economic exchange but also cultivate empathy, emotional intelligence, self-awareness, and trust, qualities essential to building sustainable customer relationships in contemporary business contexts.

Moreover, the Minangkabau tradition of *ago-ma-ago* provides a compelling case study for understanding how localized cultural rituals can serve as mechanisms of resistance and identity construction in the face of market homogenization. Rather than viewing traditional bargaining as outdated, this practice should be reinterpreted as a dynamic form of posthumanist relationality. Future research is encouraged to investigate similar practices in other communities, particularly those where localized rituals challenge the logic of economic efficiency and offer alternative models of social and commercial engagement.

To advance *ago-ma-ago* as a conceptual and strategic framework in broader business applications, particularly within modern retail contexts, requires collaborative commitment from both practitioners and scholars. Practitioners must recognize the value of socio-cultural embeddedness in building consumer relationships, while researchers should continue to explore, theorize, and adapt the potential of *ago-ma-ago* as a model for relational commerce that is both locally rooted and globally relevant.

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